

Message Text

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53

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-10 MC-02 AID-05 OPR-02 NIC-01 /101 W

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R 031607Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2679

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL SAMARA

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

UNCLAS BEIRUT 1571

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJ: ELF SPOKESMEN IN BEIRUT SPEAK ON ASMARA FIGHTING

1. QUOTING "RANKING ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT (ELF) OFFICIAL," BEIRUT'S INDEPENDENT AN NAHAR ON FEB 2 REPORTED THAT PRINCIPAL REASON ERITREAN GUERRILLAS WERE ABLE TO LAUNCH LARGE OFFENSIVE IN ASMARA IS "PREVAILING CONFUSION IN ETHIOPIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, DUE TO COLLABORATION OF LARGE NUMBER OF ITS ERITREAN ELEMENTS." ACCORDING TO ELF SPOKESMAN, ASMARA POLICE COMMANDER, GEN GITEON GIBRAZKI, IS AMONG COLLABORATORS AND "TOTAL PARALYSIS" OF ETHIOPIAN INTELLIGENCE NETWORK "ENSURES (ERITREAN) REVOLUTIONARIES FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT."

2. IN SAME ARTICLE, SPOKESMAN FOR POPULAR LIBERATION FRONT (PLF) ALSO CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASMARA OFFENSIVE, STATING THAT IT WAS NOT AIMED AT OCCUPYING ASMARA BUT WAS PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE AGAINST ETHIOPIAN MILITARY PREPARATIONS
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AGAINST ERITREAN REBELS. ACCORDING TO A "REVOLUTIONARY

COUNCIL" SPOKESMAN, ALSO QUOTED IN ARTICLE, OFFENSIVE WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY "LARGE CONSIGNMENT OF WEAPONS FROM SYRIA, IRAQ, AND SOUTH YEMEN." (AN NAHAR ALSO CLAIMED ELF RECENTLY RECEIVED ARMS SHIPMENT FROM LIBYA WORTH SEVERAL MILLION DOLLARS.) SAME SPOKESMAN REITERATED ELF WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT BASED ON "RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND INDEPENDENCE," BUT ADDED, "PATH TO A JUST SETTLEMENT IS STILL LONG."

3. IN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED BY NAHAR FEB 1, ELF LEADER OTHMAN SABBEH DEMANDED EARLY ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE AND WARNED AGAINST ETHIOPAIN ESCALATION OF FIGHTING. ASSERTING ELF CAPABLE OF CUTTING COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND REST OF WORLD, SABBEH DECLARED ESCALATION WOULD CAUSE "WHOLE OF NORTHEAST AFRICA TO UP IN FLAMES" AND LEAD ELF TO PROVOKE REBELLION OF "OTHER NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS" IN ETHIOPIA. DENYING ELF RESPONSIBILITY FOR BOMBINGS IN ADDIS ABABA DURING RECENT WEEKS, SABBEH WARNED ELF IS "CAPABLE OF DOING MUCH MORE IF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES FAIL PREVENT MASSACRE OF ERITREAN CIVILIANS WHICH ETHIOPIA IS NOW CONTEMPLATING."

4. LOCAL FRENCH-LANGUAGE L'ORIENT-LE JOUR (FEB 1) REPORTS SABBEH MET WITH LEBANESE PRIMIN SOLH JAN 31 IN BID FOR LEBANESE SUPPORT FOR ELF EFFORTS TO GAIN SELF-DETERMINATION AND TO ORGANIZE INTERNATIONALLY-CONTROLLED REFERENDUM THAT WOULD DETERMINE POLITICAL FUTURE OF ERITREA. ACCORDING L'ORIENT, SABBEH TOLD NEWSMEN THAT PRIMIN HAD ASSURED HIM OF LEBANESE SUPPORT FOR ELF AND THAT HE NOW HOPES MEET WITH PRESIDENT FRANGIE IN ORDER TO SUBMIT LIST OF ERITREAN POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS.
GODLEY

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